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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 001037

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AF FOR A/S FRAZER, AF/SPG, SE NATSIOS
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TAGS: KPKO PGOV PHUM PREL UN AU SU

SUBJECT: IRC PRESIDENT SEES TANGIBLE IMPROVEMENT IN GOS
COOPERATION

Classified By: CDA Alberto M. Fernandez, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)
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¶1. (SBU) CDA met with International Rescue Committee President George Rupp and his visiting delegation (and IRC Country Representative Nicky Smith) to get a sense of their week-long stay in Sudan and interaction with the GOS. The delegation was generally quite pleased with their meetings with GOS officials, which included MFA, NISS, HAC and others.

They had made time to wait for appointments and meet with Sudanese officials and had gotten the meetings and answers they had sought. They sensed a much more cooperative spirit coming from the Sudanese side, with the NISS offering to "run interference" with Humanitarian Affairs officials (many of whom have an intelligence background themselves) to get approval for visas and travel documents. They said that they are optimistic that circumstances are slowly improving for IRC in Sudan and they had seen "tangible progress over the past few days" in getting approvals for their staff. They cautioned that "we are not out of the woods just yet" but felt confident that they will have "increased space for humanitarian operations" in Sudan.

¶2. (SBU) IRC was very appreciative of USG support in keeping the pressure on the GOS and in getting the Humanitarian Access Agreement approved. This is finally paying off with the GOS. They noted that the relationship was "conflicted, they will never love us," but it is "actually getting better before our eyes" and the Sudanese now understood that IRC had a 27 year history of helping the Sudanese people, that they were not going anywhere and that IRC was non-political and had nothing to do with foreign advocacy organizations which may have a political axe to grind against the GOS. IRC and CDA Fernandez agreed to continue to cooperate closely for a consistent improvement in humanitarian access and to encourage the GOS to follow through over time with more positive steps.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: In recent meetings with senior GOS officials, such as the late Presidential Advisor Magzoub al-Khalifa and Minister of State Ali Karti, both of them hardliners with a Darfur focus, the GOS made it clear that they were going to improve the working relationship with the NGO community working in Sudan. This was being done not out of any sense of altruism or common purpose but because they clearly understood the utility of using the operational NGOs working on the ground in Sudan against the much more shrill advocacy NGOs calling for tough action against the Khartoum regime in the West. As IRC pointed out, there is no love lost between them and the GOS and yet they also see a qualitative gap between their practical humanitarian work on the ground,

helping real people, and posturing on an international stage that can have negative repercussions inside Sudan. This is a case of cynical exploitation by the GOS and allowing oneself to be used by them that is resulting in improving access for humanitarian aid workers and improved delivery of services. It isn't pretty but the end result is what we want to see and encourage more of from the regime. END COMMENT.

FERNANDEZ